

NOAA Diversity Council Meeting Minutes
September 15, 2001
Silver Spring, Maryland

Members in Attendance: Scott Gudes, Rich Behn, Barbara Marshall-Bailey, Teresa Havel, Lynne Phipps, B. Carzell Cody, Jamie Hawkins, Cheryl Malone, Stewart Remer, Roy Miller, John Jones, Brian S. Maher, Louisa Koch, John Wright, Mary Glackin, Lamont Jackson, Rick Jackson, Melanie Fields-Jones, Lolly Shapero, Zane Schauer, Sim Aberson, John Oliver, Alfred A. Corea, Bob Taylor, Janice Freeman-Hall, Barbara Brentworth

Opening Remarks:

- Scott opened the meeting with a discussion of the tragic events of September 11th and the impact it will have on NOAA. He spoke of the Secretary's email on the tragedy and mentioned websites for relief organizations. Scott said that the Diversity Council deals with the people of NOAA and how to make NOAA a better workplace – and that the Council may have an even greater role as we face what challenges our future may bring. NOAA has 29 law enforcement people working in Boston and New York to assist with investigative efforts.
- Scott mentioned that the Survey Feedback Action (SFA) results may be influenced by a lot of things this time around, not just workplace issues but security issues as well. He said that all staff offices will get posters “NOAA Serves America” and “God Bless America.” Scott announced that the focus of the September issue of Navigations - NOAA's worklife newsletter, would be information and resources on how to cope with grief and trauma.
- Zane Schauer shared his experience of volunteering to help with the relief efforts at the Pentagon and gave the web-site Libertyunite.org , if anyone wanted to help with donations of any kind. He spoke of the FEEAS Fund that provided relief to families of employees that were killed. He said that issues of diversity are more important now than ever. He also mentioned that 6% of NWS employees are reservists and could be activated into service. The question is, “How does NOAA handle this?”
- Louisa Koch wanted to know what the differences were between the EAP

and Worklife Center and wondered if the Worklife Center was overwhelmed with requests for information and assistance during this time. Barbara explained that the Center has received a very small percentage of requests for assistance or information resulting from the attacks thus far.

- Scott then welcomed new members to the Council, Barbara Brenkworth – employee representative for Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Employees (GLOBE), Janice Hall – employee representative for Blacks in Government (BIG), and David Waller representing(OMAO).
- Minutes from the February 2001 Diversity Council meeting were reviewed and approved with the following Corrections:

Action: -Remove Sim Aberson from list of members in attendance
-Delete the word “Bottom” from the Norfolk 10 Committee
-Add that John Wright submitted a High School High Tech proposal

Working at Sea Worklife Issues

- David Waller spoke about the worklife issues NOAA employees face on ships and at sea. He said that some employees are out to sea and away from home 240 days a year. There are issues around retention and recruitment especially for employees in wage grade positions. Going to sea doesn’t attract younger people and we need to figure out how to make it more inviting. Dave went on to say that they are ready to bring out a new ship – “the Adventurous”. He indicated that it will take a lot of talented people to work on this ship and the question is what can NOAA do to attract people to work on ships? Dave reminded the Council to keep the crews in mind because they often feel they are not included. Crew members don’t see timely pay increases and sometimes crews work 18 hours a day with no time off. This gets to be very stressful. Dave stated that safety of the crews come before the mission and that the accommodations for crews – the racking and stacking will have to stop. Dave concluded by saying that we have to be creative with worklife issues, crews need tools, resources and help.
- Scott said that Dave raised some very good points. Scott served at sea for three days and assured Dave that we are addressing these issues, and that they were not new issues to him or to Admiral Fields. He mentioned that

these issues are a priority for Admiral Fields.

- Bob Taylor said that he appreciated Dave's participation on the Council and said that although these are not new issues, recruitment and retention remain important issues.
- Dave mentioned that they have formed a Civilian Leadership Council and that they are going to have to make some hard decisions, however it should be a win/win situation.
- Scott made three points:
 - (1)Admiral Fields has made many of the same points to Scott and members of the Department.
 - (2)NOAA has made a concerted effort to modernize the ships to make them more habitable.
 - (3)Turnover issues are inherent in sea duty positions.
- Barbara summarized Dave's 2 major points:
 - (1)Leadership needs to focus on life and work of employees
 - (2)Our worklife center can help to provide whatever service is within their power with the advice and guidance of Council members and others such as Dave.
- Barbara suggested that a standing committee of the Council be formed to address this issue and others such as shift work.
- John Jones mentioned that NWS will continue with shift work issues and they will have union involvement.
- Dave volunteered to lead the standing committee. Bob said that the group will let people know resources are available. Dave reminded the Council that ships don't have internet and that there is a communications gap on ships. We need to help the crews with jobs and professional growth. Often people on ships don't know about job vacancies on the ships or do not get them in time and therefore don't apply.
- Barbara asked if any other offices are interested in working on a standing

committee to address these types of issues. Louisa, John Jones and John Oliver expressed an interest.

TV Update

- Barbara reminded the Council that at our previous meeting she had indicated that there would be cable tv placed in the lobbies and cafeterias of the Silver Spring complex. She indicated that the installation has been delayed because she has been coordinating with the CIO's office on a related initiative. She introduced Dave McClure to discuss the initiative:
- David McClure of the CIO's office provided an update on TVs in the Silver Spring Complex. He said that the auditorium and conference rooms will be upgraded and saw this as an opportunity to pull together what Facilities and Diversity were doing. The auditorium would be modernized, there would be webstreaming capabilities from a room in the auditorium and the video equipment in the conference rooms would be modernized.
- David mentioned that the Office of Diversity is installing TVs in all lobbies and the cafeteria so that they will have the capability to continuously run videos and announcement crawlers at the bottom of the screen with cable capabilities on-screen to show CNN or the Weather Channel. NOAA employees can be trained to operate the equipment from the control room in the auditorium. The Diversity Office could also create power point presentations to display on all of the linked televisions
- The Council felt this was a good idea and had questions regarding when all conference rooms and SSMC buildings would have this service. Barbara Brenkworth mentioned that some of the decisions about which areas would get service first were from the tenant board, and other decisions were based on funding available.

NOAA Employee Worklife Center Update

- Madeline Fried of Caliber Fried and Sher gave an update of Center usage. The first three months the Center has been opened have been very active.

Over 600 employees have used the center during the first three months. Madeline mentioned that they have worked with Navy and Coast Guard on working at sea issues. Most of the requests for information have come from employees in the metro area. Some employees in the field have asked about financial information and overall requests from the field have been few.

Norfolk Ten Subcommittee

- Mary Glackin gave an update on the Norfolk 10 Subcommittee. The issues impact both HR and Diversity. Mary said that there is more work to do and that the Subcommittee needs to work more closely with Barbara. Hope to come to next Council meeting with specific recommendations.

Survey Feedback Action

- Sirota gave a step by step presentation on the SFA 02 survey process. After the presentation, the Council reviewed the decision points which were presented and made the following decisions:
 - The survey will be administered by web, phone and hard copy
 - Each line office will indicate how many people will do organizational coding and will provide their names to Barbara by September 24
 - The time line for when the survey will be administered will depend upon how long it will take for the line offices to complete organizational verifications and review the survey questionnaire. It could be administered for a 4-5 week period – months discussed were November or January.
 - The questionnaire will not be password protected
 - Taking the survey will be voluntary
 - Feedback meetings will be mandatory
 - Action planning will be mandatory
 - Decisions on whether or not facilitators will be mandatory for feedback meetings and whether or not the “Action Tracker” will be used will be made at later date.
 - Regarding survey review: Survey comments from line/staff offices to SIROTA on 9/21; SIROTA to provide draft survey to the Diversity Office by 9/28; Diversity Office will provide survey to Council by 10/1; Council will have until 10/5 to complete their review. After

Council review SIROTA will prepare final – final will be sent to Council and Union for final comments. Union review is at least 2 weeks.

General Discussion:

- Bernard Cody addressed the Council to share his concerns that he had learned that Barbara might be leaving NOAA and that the Diversity Office would be moved under OFA. Bernard expressed how NOAA and its diversity initiatives would be impacted if Barbara were to leave and if the Diversity Office were to be placed under OFA. He then asked the Council to give their opinions. Council members Janice Freeman-Hall, Barbara Brentworth and Lamont Jackson stated that the Diversity Office should report to the highest level in the organization to be most effective rather than be driven further down. Other Council members expressed that this was the first time they had heard about this and wanted more information. John Oliver asked to whom does Barbara report and who signs off on her performance plan? Stu responded that Barbara's position is matrixed. That she reports to OFA (Stu) on administrative matters, but to the chair of the Council on diversity (Rich and Scott). Stu indicated that both he and Scott sign off on her performance plan and appraisal.
- As a result of this discussion the Council developed the following resolution:

The NOAA Diversity Council resolves that the organizational reporting of the (NOAA Diversity Manager-) Office of Diversity to NOAA senior management is critical to the effectiveness of the Diversity Council and the Diversity Program. As such, the Diversity Council requests that NOAA senior management consult with the Diversity Council on any changes contemplated in the organizational reporting of the Office of Diversity.

Mary Glackin then asked for a verbal approval. All Council members approved the resolution - no one abstained or opposed.

Round Table:

- During the roundtable discussion Jamie asked if the Diversity Council could add a statement to the website that says that in light of recent events, the

NOAA Diversity Council condemns the harassment of Muslims. When asked if this statement should be on the NOAA website, John Oliver said that perhaps this could be added to the Diversity Council website quicker than the NOAA website and that it could be added to the NOAA site after. There was no vote taken on this – however, the NOAA Diversity Manager has taken this as an action item and is developing language to be added to the Diversity Council website.

- The next meeting will be held October 19 and John Oliver proposed that the agenda items for that meeting be prioritized with SFA being the first item of discussion.

Meeting adjourned at 1:30

SUMMARY OF COUNCIL MEETING ACTIONS/ DECISIONS:

Action: -Remove Sim Aberson from list of members in attendance
-Delete the word “Bottom” from the Norfolk 10 Committee
-Add that John Wright submitted a High School High Tech proposal

Action: Survey comments from line/staff offices to SIROTA on 9/21; SIROTA to provide draft survey to the Diversity Office by 9/28; Diversity Office will provide survey to Council by 10/1; Council will have until 10/5 to complete their review. After Council review SIROTA will prepare final – final will be sent to Council and Union for final comments. Union review is at least 2 weeks.

Action: Verbiage related to the Council’s opposition to discrimination against Muslims will be added to the Diversity Council website.

Decision: The Diversity Council resolves that the organizational reporting of the (NOAA Diversity Manager) Office of Diversity to NOAA senior management is critical to the effectiveness of the Diversity Council and the Diversity Program. As such, the Diversity Council requests that NOAA senior management consult with the Diversity Council on any changes contemplated in the organizational reporting of the Office of Diversity.